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The *Trout*
and
Identification Guide

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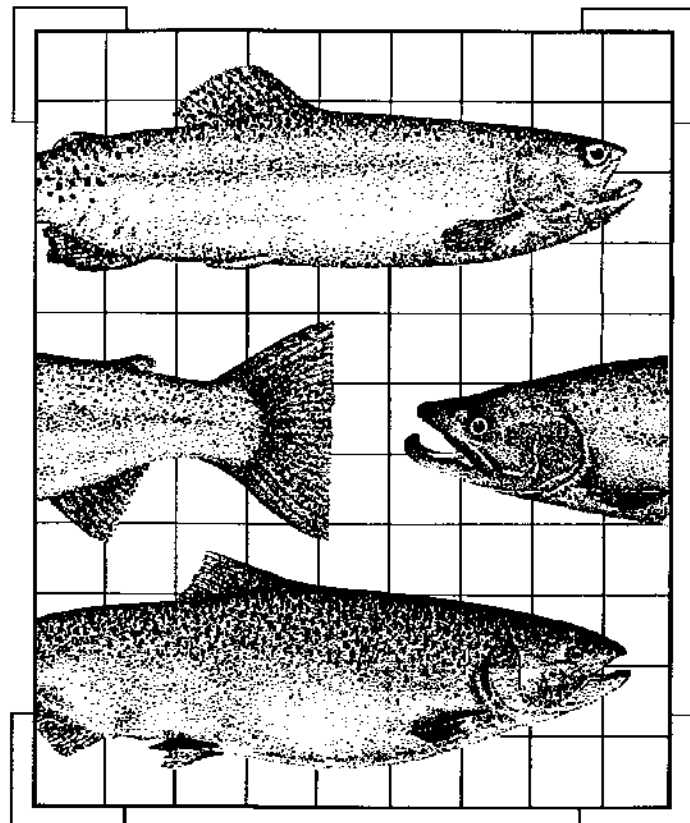


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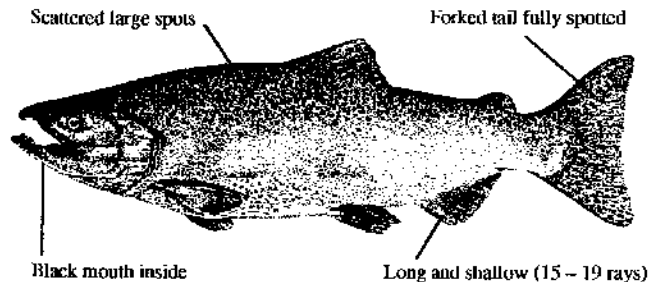
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Washington
Department of Wildlife

Identification key for large, sport-caught Salmonids

Chinook Salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*)



*Spawning condition: dark coloring
and enlarged jaw*

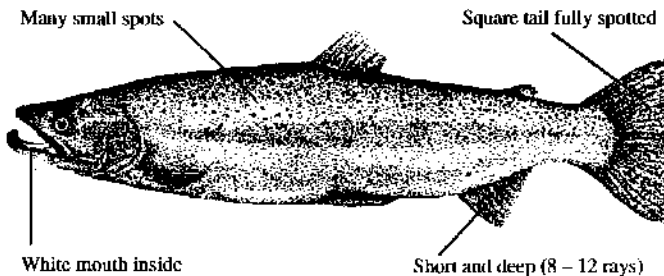
One of the most important things for a fisherman to learn is to correctly identify the fish he or she has caught. That's not as easy to do as it sounds, especially here in Washington where we have such a variety of fish.

If you are a stream fisherman, the challenge becomes even tougher. We have resident and sea-run varieties of several trout species, many of which closely resemble the different salmon species, particularly during the critical smolt state. Color alone is often an unreliable characteristic.

In spite of the built-in difficulties, this is a skill you must learn. Many of the management regulations are species specific, and what is appropriate and legal for one species, may not be for another, similar-looking species. It is your responsibility to understand the regulation and to identify the fish the regulations applies to. Besides that, being able to identify the fish you catch will make your fishing experience even more enjoyable.

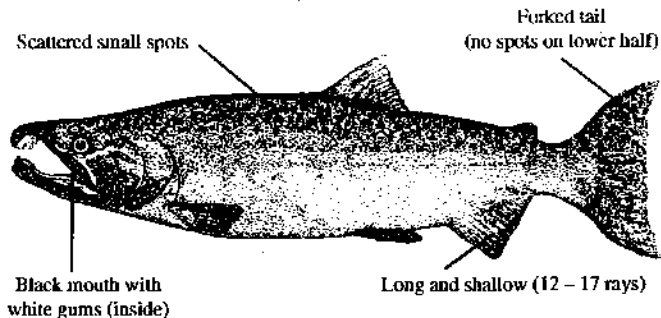
This guide is intended to provide a simple step-by-step key to help you identify the trout or salmon you have caught. Practice common sense techniques when handling the fish while you determine what kind it is. If in doubt, let it go.

Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)



*Spawning condition: reddish side stripe
and somewhat enlarged jaw*

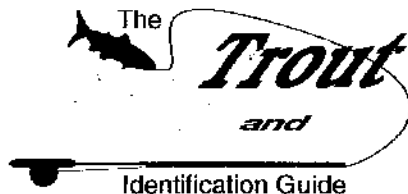
Silver or Coho Salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*)



*Spawning condition: reddish with
enlarged jaw and dark body color*

Trout and Char

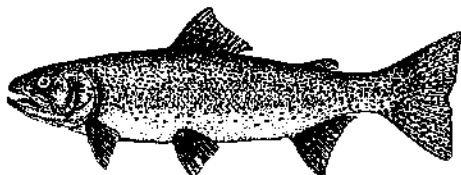
The anal fin has 12 or fewer rays.



Salmon

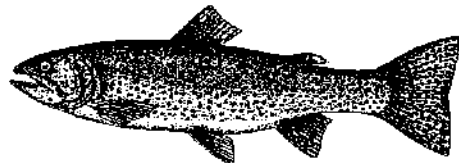
The anal fin has 13 or more rays.

Trout: (Note: Rainbow, Cutthroat, and golden trout have been reclassified as salmon species, but these identification characteristics still apply.) The body is light-colored with dark spots.



Rainbow Trout and Steelhead

There are small dark spots scattered over the entire fish, including the tail, with slight to pronounced rainbow coloring. (no teeth on tongue)



Cutthroat Trout

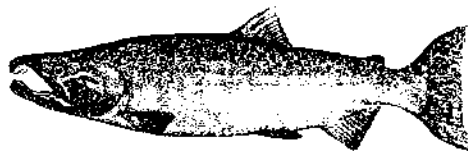
There are red-orange slash marks on the underside of the lower jaw. (may not be visible in bright sea-runs) (teeth on tongues)



Golden Trout

The spots are mostly in the tail.

Salmon: With distinct black spots on tail and back.



Coho Salmon

There are small, irregular spots only on the upper half of the tail, and the gums at the base of the teeth are white.



Chinook Salmon

There are small, irregular spots on the entire tail, and the gums at the base of the teeth are black.



Brown Trout

The spots are large, black or red, often with a pale halo surrounding them, and missing from the tail.



Pink Salmon

There are large, oblong spots on the back and the entire tail.

Atlantic Salmon

The spots are small, x-shaped, with no halos, and absent from the tail.

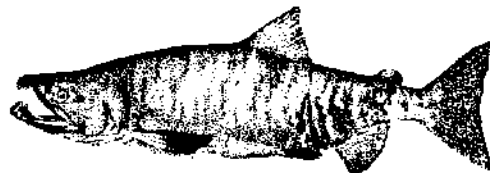
***Salmon:* With no distinct black spots on tail and back.**

***Char:* The body is dark-colored with light spots.**



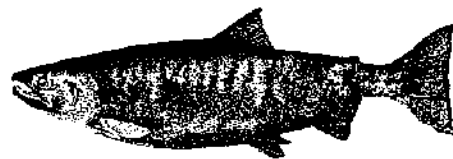
Brook Trout

There are conspicuous wavy "worm trail" markings on the back and dorsal fin, with white leading edges on the lower fins, and crimson spots surrounded by a blue halo.



Chum Salmon

If caught during spawning time, the fish is an olive green color with purple bars.



Lake Trout

The body has irregular white or gray spots.



Sockeye Salmon

If caught during spawning time, the fish is bright red.

Kokanee (Landlocked Sockeye)

If caught from a lake, the fish is a bright silvery color.

Dolly Varden or Bull Trout

The spots on the body are orange (sometimes crimson) to cream colored with no blue halo.

